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THE B.A. DEGREE IN AMERICA

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IT requires no very great hardihood to assert that the B.A. degree, in this country, has been cheapened to the verge of meaninglessness. The degree has been so lavishly conferred, and for such a variety of accomplishment, that the letters after a man's name mean nothing of any importance—unless, perchance, they are followed by a parenthesis enclosing the name of the conferring institution. Even then, that for which they stand, let the institution be of the very best we have, is not crystal-clear.

And there is not much stress, despite the efforts of the Carnegie Foundation, in the direction of improvement. Engineering degrees, and the M.D., tend to keep themselves up, because they touch more intimately and vitally upon definite and concrete human interests. The bridge breaks down; the patients die—here is a sort of inevitable test that checks up results and imposes stress. Results are verifiable. But the B.A. is far removed from such tests—farther, perhaps, than any other degree in course. People have nothing definite that they expect from a B.A., whereby they can judge whether any standard has been reached or not. Nor yet has any college known to the writer a set policy in regard to the degree, so that outsiders, on examining its product, can decide whether it has succeeded in its business or not.

I am not about to try to prove the above assertions. I take them to be self-evident to any one who has thought, or chooses to reflect, upon the situation. I wish, rather, to put a query.

Suppose that an endowed college sets itself the question of making a B.A. course which will stand for something so valuable that it will be glad to have its special guarantee-mark in the parenthesis after the letters—so that it will be as jealous of that mark as a high-class firm is of its trade-mark. Suppose it says: "The 'B.A. (Weissnichtwo)' shall stand for quality." Suppose, that is, that this college wants to adopt a definite policy with respect to the B.A. degree. What shall it do?

There is one very simple and easy answer: get all good

teachers, and no poor ones, and sit tight. But this can not be done. Most colleges have a number of poor teachers—whom almost any one would regard as such—attached irretrievably to the faculty; and even if all the poor ones would conveniently resign, still their places could not be filled with good ones. The market doesn't hold enough of them. And, of course, there would be at once a difference of judgment, except in the extreme cases, as to what a teacher should be. To this latter point I shall return. For now, all that can be done as an approach to this counsel of millennial perfection is to make no future whimsical or snap-appointments—to be fastidious to the last degree, according to what lights and conscience we have, in the selection of members, and particularly permanent members, of a faculty. Also there should be such discipline in a faculty that inefficient or conscienceless members should be under pressure to do the best they could. If, even as faculties are now constituted, every one did the best that was in him, the case would not be anywhere nearly so bad as it is. This too may seem to be a utopian suggestion. But it helps to set the case before us. Let us now return to our query, modifying it to read: What *can* a college do in the construction of a B.A. policy?

No college can pluck figs from thistles; nor yet can it, however ineffectual its offerings, make thistles out of figs. The sort of students that come to it represent a constant element in its showing and destiny. Nothing worth while in the way of a system or policy is possible until punctilious account is taken of the material to which the B.A. process is to be applied. This is one of those perfectly obvious things that some professors chronically ignore, thus bringing a connotation into the term "academic" that is far from flattering.

In the case before us, this constant is the young American of eighteen to twenty-two, or thereabouts, who comes to our colleges. It seems almost a triviality to say that he is the product of his social environment, and that he can not be made otherwise without first altering that environment—certainly not by yearning over him or vituperating him because he is not like the English, French or German lads. Of course he can be treated in a course so that he will avoid that course, as is demonstrated within every college by certain teachers who gradually clear their courses of undergraduates. From any sane college standpoint, such "instruction" can not be approved. No artificer amounts to much who can not or does not take the trouble to know his materials.

What are the outstanding qualities of this human material? Said an eminent scholar of foreign birth and training, regretting the very course of unremitting attention to study in boyhood which had perhaps made him what he was—upon which, at any rate, an American colleague was commenting, to the disadvantage of American methods: "Yes. But I had no youth. I had no youth." Perhaps this remark made some impression upon the colleague. I do not know. But it offers us a starting-point from which to envisage the American lad. He is having his youth. It makes of him this and that which is revolting to an elderly soul. It is hard sometimes to have patience, even if one has not forgotten his own youth. But, after all, what a wonderful thing youth is, as it recedes from one who has lived it with gusto! Would he have it abolished in favor of a precocious seriousness of maturity? It should be listed as an evidence of kindly design in the universe that, in this country at least, that can not be done. In any case, here is a constant factor, to be reckoned with, molded somewhat if desirable and possible, but not inveighed against.

One of the chief complaints about the student is that he does not know, early in his course, what he is going to do when he leaves college. If he did, he could then specialize and quit "trying," ingenuously, or disingenuously, this and that. Well, most of them do not, with telescopic or prophetic eye, view the vista of their futures. Their life-status, in America, is not settled soon enough. There are no cut-and-dried careers to which they are, as it were, preordained. So, too, they are not set off into life-status or class; it was partly to get rid of such Old-World inflexibility that people have migrated to this country. We have no "careers" for which an undergraduate, studying non-professional branches, can fit himself. In other words, the social environment in the United States is such as not to call for early specialization in a regular college, and so it does not occur. There are professional schools for that. And even these are coming latterly to demand an antecedent degree of the B.A. order, as something, vague and uncertain, perhaps, but yet indispensable before strict specialization. The directors of such professional schools—which are the most noted ones—seem to see something useful in the colleges, even as they are. What they want, of course, is a clientage of liberally educated men; if a doctor or a lawyer knows only medicine or law, he is at a discount in these days. The doctor has an increasingly significant social function. Even the soldier, as the recent changes in the West Point curriculum indicate, ought to know some English and history.

As a matter of fact, a very large proportion of college graduates go into "business." Now there is no form of specialization for this career except in a business college. Academic courses in economics are not meant to teach a man how to be a bank-teller or how to buck the stock-market. If professors could teach business, they would be likely to show more evidence of having practised it, on the side, instead of constituting a chosen mark for promoters of all sorts of doubtful ventures. What the business-man-to-be wants out of college is a cultivated, adaptable mind and widened interests, so that there will be something in his life besides business. He needs a liberal education. Plenty of men in college know that they are going in with their fathers, or they have positions otherwise in view; but they do not want to specialize, or they would not be in college. No matter what they came there for, it was not to become business specialists, or any other sort of specialists; and they constitute a proportion that has steadily grown ever since the time when going to college and doing pretty well generally meant entrance into the ministry.

Here are some facts about students, as they are. Anybody who knows the student knows they are true; and any one who does not know him, as he is, not as a figment of a prepossessed mind, has no business to be talking about the matter at all. It is a detriment to education when such men get into positions which seem to lend them weight in counsel, so that they can impress outsiders, oppress their colleagues, and at length depress the reputation of all education by attaching to it, again, as their talk is seen to be futile, the connotation which "academic" has come to bear.

The "liberal education" of which I have spoken is not specialization. It is selection. It is a process of "discovery of mind," as one efficient teacher phrases it. This discovery is consummated by "exposing" the as yet unoriented, or even unformed mind, to certain influences. The youthful mind does not take to this process as a duck to water, by any means. A veteran teacher once remarked that he had never ceased to marvel at the infinite capacity of the human mind to resist the introduction of knowledge. Hence the need of "school-mastering," where that means effort in the opening of minds and the rendering of them sensitive, and in the imposition of discipline. If the education is to be a "liberal" one, this "exposure," in many directions and to a variety of intellectual influences, must be accomplished, though it has to be forced. No matter what a student comes to college for, this "exposure" should take place,

and this "discovery of mind" should be accomplished—or the student should leave college. It is freely granted that the life among one's fellows, at college, possesses educational value of the highest order; very likely the athletics and the rest of the "extra-curriculum activities" have their sort of educational value. But the faculty can not take cognizance of these except to exult over or regret their presence. The B.A. degree stands for things of the curriculum. In any respectable college the passing of the courses, together with the maintenance of a certain conventionality of behavior, is the *sine qua non* for the B.A. degree. Considering the nature of the student, what should the B.A. stand for, intellectually? What should the curriculum of studies be? What is a "liberal education," in these days and in this country?

Education is the transfer of knowledge, rules of living, discipline, etc., which makes the young into fit members of society—fit, that is, to take the places of the passing generation. Being that, it is different in different societies—Zulu, Afghan, American, English, German. All schools aim at this; the graded schools try to inculcate what they consider the absolute essentials, for those who can not go very far. The high schools aim at a fuller preparation for life in the local society. And then come the colleges whose product is, or was once, at least, supposed to constitute a class competent to grapple, with knowledge, discernment, and trained and disciplined mind, with any and all aspects of social life. We know that this reputation was never deserved; but at least the college graduate was supposed to have had the chance, whatever he did with it, of making the acquaintance of all forms of knowledge. He was a man who had had opportunities beyond the common range of men for knowing about the questions that have always engaged the interest of man. He had had the chance to know what was worth knowing.

Not so very long ago the stock of human knowledge was much smaller than it is now, and the idea of what was worth knowing was a traditional matter. Both of these facts contributed to a prescribed course of study. Rightly or wrongly the college degree meant something definite: Latin, Greek, mathematics, metaphysics, etc. Every one had to take pretty much the same course; and he had to study certain subjects, whether he wanted to or not, or he might leave college. If any one wanted the B.A., he could present certain fixed prerequisites and pursue study on lines laid down. He could take it or leave it; and there was no control exercised over the college by the

lower schools. There were numerous advantages in all this. At least the B.A. course had the dignity of its convictions.

But it was not adaptable. There was too little room for variation and new selection, with consequent adjustment to environment. And so the old required college course came to be out of joint with the times. Its inertia of tradition prevented it from seeing any good in the newer disciplines. Its self-sufficiency stirred such powerful opposition and criticism as is typified in Herbert Spencer's classic work on education. The resistance it offered caused the gathering forces of the new time to carry the college course out of the hands of these who had been its natural directors virtually into the hands of the students themselves. The elective system secured freedom from tradition; but this freedom was not that sole kind of liberty that ever benefited the race—liberty under law—but ran out into license and abuse. Doubtless the reaction was perfectly normal, in view of the entrenched conservatism of the old curriculum; those in charge of the colleges, who resisted the new, brought all their woes upon themselves. But it was entirely irrational, and cheapened the college and its degree, to leave the course of study to the untrained and often whimsical (when it was not a super-expert) choice of a lot of boys.

It was not that the old course was a required one that brought on its collapse under assault; it was the nature of the requirements, and of the exclusions. New forms of knowledge were on the increase, and, in particular, science was coming to be the feature of the age. If education was going to fit the young to live in the society of the time, it could not stick to the old course and look with contempt upon the characteristic intellectual activity of the epoch. By trying to do this, it proved itself maladaptable and was selected away. This was inevitable; the old education was suffering from a sort of "spin-escence" and could no longer adjust; and so the board had to be swept clean, for a new deal.

No cataclysm of this order can occur without loss of much that is good. As I have intimated, we now see that the old system had its parts. We can never go back to it again—*Was vergangen kommt nie wieder*—but there is no reason why we can not, now the surge of the reaction against it is past, and it is dead forever, reintroduce some of its best features.

I have said that the old required course did not fall because of the requirement, but because of the course. The element of requirement was swept away along with the course, in the rush of reaction and of resentment. Then came the confusion of the

two; requirement of anything became anathema, and freedom was the watchword all along the lines. The elective system reached clear into the elementary schools, as an inundation, having once risen to surmount its first barriers, goes coursing up the country toward the foothills. But sensible people are now coming to see the folly of such extremes, and to awaken to the fact that the college course, like any other course of learning, should be laid down by men of experience and perspective, not by boys who lack both. If those who have tried to direct the studies of the youth had not ignored the nature of the material with which they had to deal, as certain savants whom I have noticed still wish to do, the axiom that any course of study, whatever it may be, should be required (and should be so difficult as not to be chosen voluntarily by the ne'er-do-well) in order to be effective, would long ago have been generally admitted.

I believe firmly in a required course of study, therefore; though I premise that it is to be laid down by men of experience with students of all types, and who have attained a perspective, not only of studies, but of the life of the society into which the students are to be *per gradus* inducted—"graduated." First of all, therefore, I think that a college wishing to adopt a policy regarding the B.A. degree, should move straight toward a required course. If the student insists upon choosing, let him choose between colleges—there will always be some that allow him "freedom." But having chosen to try for our sort of B.A., which we are striving to make distinctive and distinguished, let him plan to do but little more choosing. We will take the responsibility along with the power, and stand or fall by our results. Of course this takes some nerve, and means that we bid defiance to the prevalent cult of numbers. We may even become poorer, for a time—though, if we carry out our plan we shall presently have candidates, as one man put it, "yammering at our gates."

I said that the student should do little more choosing. He should do none that would allow him to evade a certain "irreducible minimum" of requirement. Now, what will this irreducible minimum be? Naturally, the very essence of essentials. In a word, it will include what a thoughtful mature graduate is glad he had, and does not see how he could have spared, plus what he regrets that he did not have, in his own college course. Putting together the experiences of such men, experiences of which I know, I find that a collegian should make the acquaintance of all of the several characteristic disciplines included in the curriculum of any college of the better sort. One man I

know, reared under the old régime and rebelling in no pronounced way against it, graduated without knowing any natural science—knowing no astronomy, chemistry, biology, physiology, embryology, geology, or botany. He had no course treating of the greatest single factor in modern scientific thought, Darwinian evolution. I am speaking only of disciplines to which he was not “exposed” at all. There were some courses which he took that were rendered useless to him because taught so poorly as to be repellent, or because they were unsystematic, or (even at that time) arranged for the budding specialist. In a number of lines, therefore, including some in which he had courses, he was not sent out of college ready to understand, as a liberally educated man should, many of the most significant things in the life of the society within which he was to live and labor. In certain lines he has had to acquire, by considerable exertion, the elements of sciences related to his own special work and necessary to him. With all these hiatuses in his fit, he was not a liberally educated man. He will never be that now, for life seizes one and works him and wearies him, and the power of acquisition, and the time for it, fail.

Others whom I know pursued science more especially, in the time they could win out of the old classical schedule, and do not show the painful lack of it indicated above; but they have a similar ignorance of modern language, let us say, or history, or literature. They feel these lacks and have as strenuously labored somehow to make them up, as my other friend did in the matter of science. They were not liberally educated, because they had had little but science; he, because he had had almost no science.

It is a common saying of the advocate of specialization that any defect incurred by devoting attention almost solely to one thing will be automatically remedied by the youthful specialist, who has thus learned application and seriousness of purpose. I do not know where the evidence for such a view is to be found. I recall cases used (prophetically) in point, but, viewed after the act, they did not pan out. As a matter of fact, such a specialist will remain narrow unless he is an extraordinary personality who will react against the unwisdom of his course and see its straitening effect. As for the ordinary man, he will never do this, but will live on to constitute one of that pitiful band of the half-educated who think they know it all, or will be one of those who feel all their lives the lack of a rounded equipment. There is no time later to get these things up; a more advanced age rebels against the drudgery; and no amount of

mere reading can take the place of a skilful introduction and guidance through the elements. Few will begin Greek with the excellent Balbus at seventy, or even late in middle life, as Huxley did. These things are like the diseases of children: taking them betimes is best; with adults they go hard.

Returning then to the idea of general "exposure" of the mind to cultural influences as represented in college courses, it is understood that we want all the influences, not one alone, to "take." Let one predominate after a while, if fate wills it; but see to it that there is a proper exposure to all. For one thing, you can not be sure which is the real infection till all are conscientiously tried. One influence, coming a little later, may easily be prepotent over another which looks to be the real and lasting thing until the all-compelling factor enters the field. Frequently it is a subject not encountered till senior year that proves to be the really engrossing attraction. Every such possibility should have had its chance before college is over. By that time the conditions for an intellectual orientation should all have been met, and even the totally "non-specializing" student should have selected his intellectual hobby—so blessed a thing to fall back on, "mid this dance of plastic circumstance." A sane choice of intellectual interest can not be made on the basis of mere whim, fancy, or vague yearning. I can recall a graduate student whose first idea was to write a thesis on the relation of God to the universe; but who, advised to look about a while first and study things, ended by producing an excellent dissertation upon the metal-industry of a small eastern town.

It will be observed that we are working around to the conception of the liberally educated man as one who knows enough about all the different major intellectual disciplines to have developed an intelligent special interest in one or more of them. If a student is obliged to become really acquainted with the essentials and methods of a variety of disciplines, he is almost sure to develop a fondness for some one of them. There are not a few busy men who take pride and pleasure in pursuing as they can some line of intellectual activity utterly disconnected with mere business; and this keeps them interested and interesting. Such men reflect great credit upon the college they attended; and they live happier lives. But this even semi-specialization is only a by-product of the B.A. policy here advocated, which would, as its paramount function, hold every student to a required course including the elements and essentials of all the major branches of knowledge or mind-cultivation taught in the better colleges. Let us get down nearer to par-

ticularization as to this policy, which aims to turn out well-rounded men rather than specialists or even hobbyists.

It goes without the saying that no man is well rounded who is graduated ignorant of science and scientific method; or without development on the side of the literary, or the esthetic in general. I think it would generally be admitted that the graduate should be able to read freely some language beside his own. Dispute might rise as further attempt to particularize is made. Somebody might object that one need not take both physics and chemistry, both geology and biology, both an ancient and a modern language. I suppose, however, that no one would deny that it would be better if all of these could be gotten. If, now, we scan the list of departments or subdepartments represented in the catalogue of some good college, we are surveying a classification of intellectual disciplines—a classification for the most part automatically evolved, of disciplines regarded as sufficiently typical in content and method to be set off one from another. Let us see whether such a classification, developed for ends quite other than those of this essay, can aid the present inquiry at all.

In general, there are about a dozen categories that might be considered as representing major divisions of human knowledge as taught to undergraduates: ancient language, modern language, English, mathematics, physics, chemistry, biology, geology, psychology, history, philosophy, economics, sociology. Suppose a man of twenty-two to be familiar with the general content and method of the above disciplines; would he not be a liberally educated man? Would he have the regrets at the hiatuses in his education of which I have spoken?

"No!" roars the specialist-lover, "he would not be educated! He would have a smattering of a lot of things, and really understand no one of them! Out upon him for a shallow taster!" Well, even so, would he not be better off, in his claim to be liberally educated, in his right to the B.A., than a man who had taken a strictly special course, and to whose amœbasaturated head any thought, say, of the essential nature and the evolution of human society was foreign? To whom the names of Homer and Goethe, and Caesar and Bismarck, were mere vocables?

But let us pass this instant and *ex parte* objection by for the moment, in order to get clear upon two preliminary matters, one of which conditions the other. First, is such a scheme practicable? By a simple calculation it is seen that if each discipline cited above were allowed a three-hour course for a year

in which to treat the essentials of its being, the sum of the hours would be thirty-nine (out of the usual sixty required for the B.A.). This sum could be reduced somewhat if "exposure" had already taken place—say, by four years of Latin—before coming to college; but it would also have to be increased somewhat in the case of certain disciplines begun later or covering much ground, as, for example, the social sciences or history. Forty-five hours at the outside, that is, three-fourths of the college course, ought to do the business for any one, leaving fifteen for following up certain disciplines, to attain a more intensive knowledge of them. A boy well-prepared or "exposed" at entrance would automatically, and properly, win a larger scope of election; for he would have much more than fifteen hours free. The essentials acquired, there might then be some choice, though it should not extend beyond going on with some stock course deliberately laid down by the department in question as the next vital step in acquiring the next most important things. Rambling should cease, under this system.

But I hasten to the objection now for some seconds on the lips of some readers. "From our elementary courses the student can not get the essentials or the perspective." This is true. The nature of many elementary courses, as now given, would have to be changed. Some departments always look at the elementary course as the first step toward making a specialist, and put forth no effort to get the essentials of the discipline before the student; he will gradually, doubtless—at least, it is to be hoped—soak them in as he goes on in his specializing. This attitude seems highly unwise if it is deliberate, and inexcusable if it merely represents laziness or lack of interest in beginners—a lack generally conspicuous in the specialization-champion. Nothing impresses youth so much as catching glimpses of vistas and perspectives, as he works through a tough undergrowth. It gets his interest aroused; and that is good, even for the future specialist. But we have seen that most college students have no idea of becoming specialists. Hence the conduct of an elementary course on that assumption is a basic error. A change here would be, in any case, an advantageous adjustment to actual conditions.

And then there are other elementary courses which are loosely constructed, and in connection with which there has been no attempt at all to get down to essentials—not because the idea here is specialization, but because there has been no pressure on anybody to determine what the essentials are.

Who can deny that it would be a blessing for any department

to have to take thought and be resolved as to what essentials in its line are? To "get down to brass tacks"? To clear decks for real action? Courses, as well as departmental schedules, get cluttered up with curios, antiques, and bric-à-brac, whose function is chiefly to obstruct movement and collect dust. The "irreducible minimum" to which I have alluded is what is left when these are cleared away; and it is just what the student most needs. He can be a liberally educated man if he has not read the "Castle of Otranto," but not so if he is innocent of acquaintance with "Hamlet," or "Paradise Lost," or "The Idylls of the King," and can not write clear, idiomatic English. He may be able to calculate the sort of sound waves emitted by an organ-pipe, but if he does not know how a barometer works, his physics has failed him. He may have dissected dozens of frogs, but if he does not know his Darwin and his Huxley, he is not (biologically) liberally educated.

The elementary course, required of everybody, should be a candid answer to the question: What shall here be given that the student may see the characteristic sphere in the world of learning and living occupied by this subject?

I hear the phrase "information course" echoing back to me from one of my earlier paragraphs. But what must come first; which is more elemental, even if also more elementary: facts, or syntheses and methods? Said an elderly lady, reflecting upon her schooling:¹ "I have sometimes thought that historic research would be easier for me if sometimes I knew what men did before I was forced to understand why they did it." It is the fact that is primordial, and upon it mental operations spend themselves. Many courses in economics fail because the students do not know the economic facts—say, the difference between a stock and a bond—upon which the structure of theory rises. I maintain that it is no aspersion upon a college course that it is "informational," provided the information is true and to the point. What the beginner needs, whether he is going to specialize or not, is sets of data, classified and interpreted according to the accepted theories of the discipline in question. The theory-end, admittedly, has to be in the main dogmatic, ignoring exceptions for the time; for the crucial desideratum is a foothold, a *point d'appui*. But the American student is not docile to the extent of following blindly wherever he is led. He is strongly practical, like the nation that nurtured him. He must needs see the relation of what he is doing

¹ Winifred Kirkland, "An Educational Fantasy," *Atlantic Monthly* for August, 1915, p. 237.

to human life and interests. The great figures in the teaching world have always related studies to life. If such a relation can not be compassed, it means either that the study is an unearthly phantasm or the teacher is a misfit or is at fault. Much that goes under the designation "information" is really illustration, calculated to fix a point or set of points by relating it or them to tangible facts, previously known or unknown, as anchors to hold the floating synthesis within reach. Much so-called "information" is pure exposition; and not seldom the contempt poured upon it is a reflex of envy of the results secured by the expositor skilled in his function.

The conception of a college course which I have sketched, in its essentials, demands the skilled expositor above everything else. For it proposes to stir the interest of all students and there is only one possible way to do that. Great names in the world of scholars mean nothing to the average college man; they never come to college to study under a great scholar, so far as my experience goes. In my day, at Yale, nobody had any idea that Gibbs was a great figure; and all we knew of Whitney was that he made the German grammar and dictionary, and so must be a very learned man. Seymour too must be a great scholar, we thought, for did he not write that First Three Books of the Iliad! Text-book writers do more to advertise a college among school-boys than any other class of professors. What does the average undergraduate know of the research doings of a professor, or what does he care?

But above all is the exposition. "When you go to college," says an older brother to a younger, "take X's course in Y-ology. Don't miss it. It's an eye-opener. He's hard, but he's got it." "What has X written?" queries the casually listening father, "Has he a national reputation?" "Oh, I don't know about that," is the answer. "I suppose he has. We read a book of his—I've forgotten the title. But he certainly can get it across." And the father knows that is so, for the solicitous eye of the parent, dissembled though his scrutiny may be, has discerned the unmistakable signs of something that has somehow been "got across."

This is no place to go into the qualities of the teacher except to say that he regularly has the knowledge of student-nature—he knows his materials—and the eye for essentials. He does not hope to get in much more than these, and he enfilades and cross-fires with them relentlessly. Such have been all the great expositors and mind-openers whom I have known. And, since a required system naturally evokes some opposition, it would be

particularly necessary for a college adopting that system to emphasize these qualities in appointments.

Another essential for the adoption of any such system would be the courage, not only to introduce it, but to carry it through. One of the means now advocated for improving the college degree consists in abandoning the majority of each class to its fate, letting them slide through as they will, on the analogy, or in imitation of the English "pass-men," and concentrating all attention upon the few "honors-men." The proposal of such a plan seems to some of us un-American, or, if a chauvinistic connotation clings to that term, chimerical. It is a plan that would be maladaptable to American conditions. But, apart from this, it is no way to lift the body of students to a more scholarly level; and I maintain that the American college is bound, even by the very purpose of its endowment, to aim at the body of students. Funds were not given to enable a group of lofty souls to do what they like to do in life; they were meant for the students, and, through them, for the nation. The college is the thing endowed, not the faculty.

The plan developed above would demand courage—the courage to impose a discipline over all which would issue in a considerable mortality among some—those who could not or would not fall in with requirements. Many men would have to take five years to complete the course, and many would be dropped. The plan, as distinguished from the "pass-and-honors" one, would be, not to cause the plant to grow by attaching elastics to the topmost shoots, but by going in with a pruning-hook nearer the roots.

I may conclude by enumerating briefly several of the subsidiary advantages of a course such as I have suggested. First of all, it would help to settle the vexed question of entrance-requirements. The issue would be left bare and stark: what does the college demand in order to have a man prepared to go on for its style of B.A.? If he can present qualifications, well and good; if not, there are other colleges. Next, the congested time-table, with its courses bunched in the forenoons from Monday to Friday, could be spread out into Saturday and the afternoons. No longer could an instructor's course be crippled, as it now is, by placing it on Saturday morning. And for the student there would be no more cases of four exercises or more, nor yet three or four two-hour examinations, on one day. The stress against exodus over the week-end would be strengthened, as also would that against participation in too many extra-curriculum activities—against which even the students protest.

There would not be time, if getting the degree were not to take over four years.

Departments could and must concentrate and strengthen their offerings of courses; the outlying ones must perforce decrease. This would save a great deal of trouble and money for the college.

The expense and irritation connected with making up student schedules would be lessened, and there would be no more lop-sided lists of choices, whereby a student may "specialize" unwisely or overwisely. Irregularities of attendance could be more readily dealt with, and the teachers of all departments better organized to cooperate and march together. At least they could know what their students had already had, and thus be enabled to avoid repetition and to have some idea of what there was to build on. The work of instructors could be tested up; in fact, they would be subjected to a sort of natural selection, and fewer plausible excuses could be found for failures.

The reader who is familiar with the group of irregularities known as the "abuses of the elective system" will see that they could not persist under a "new" required system. There were abuses of the "old" required system, too, but they were less than those that followed upon the lodging, in student choice, of power for determining college policy. A great many of the ills under the old required course were, I repeat, due to the course more than to the element of requirement. There will doubtless be new evils and maladjustments, but these could be dealt with, provided the general policy rested upon the facts, and on the principles derivable from knowledge of them.

And the college that offered a B.A. course of this order would stand some chance of escaping the impending fate of a college in a university: of becoming a mere feeder for the professional schools.